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ABSTRACT

The Teacher Induction Study investigated 2 state-mandated beginning teacher programs and examined the translation of state policy by 4 school districts, 13 individual schools, and 32 classrooms. From the case histories of 16 teams, 2 case histories were selected for further study. One case illustrated how institutional factors influenced team interactions in a positive way, while the other case pointed out negative influences. Data were collected from: (1) individual journals kept by the beginning teacher, the peer teacher, the building level administrator, and other education personnel; (2) interviews with each of the team members; (3) five 1-hour classroom observations of each beginning teacher and two 1-hour observations of each peer teacher; (4) a demographic questionnaire detailing background and experience of each team member; and (5) a performance evaluation by the beginning teacher of the team's effectiveness. Results indicated that the presence or absence of certain institutional factors (e.g., policy, inservice, lesson plan requirements) either facilitate or hinder entry into teaching and affect perception of success in the first year of teaching. (CB)

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TWO CASE STUDIES OF BEGINNING TEACHERS IN STATE-MANDATED INDUCTION PROGRAMS: THE INFLUENCE OF INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS

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TWO CASE STUDIES OF BEGINNING TEACHERS IN STATE-MANDATED INDUCTION PROGRAMS: THE INFLUENCE OF INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS

Introduction

Formal beginning teacher programs are relatively new phenomena, especially in terms of state certification practices. Programs designed to assure that beginning teachers are competent professionals are in place in only a few states but are being considered in a number of others. In order to provide more effective assistance, school districts employing new teachers will need knowledge-based guidelines. The Teacher Induction Study (Griffin, O'Neal, Barnes, Hoffman, Edwards, Paulissen, Salinas, & Defino, in progress) conducted by the Research in Teacher Education (RITE) program area at the Research and Development Center for Teacher Education at The University of Texas at Austin was a specific response that addressed this need for knowledge-based guidelines for programs for new teachers, one of the national concerns suggested in the report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983). The case studies discussed in this paper were selected from the participants in the larger study.

Rationale

Working in a school means that certain contextual and organizational variables unique to that institution will influence the actual and perceived nature of a beginning teacher's experience (Griffin, Barnes, Defino, Edwards, Hoffman, Hukill, & O'Neal, 1983). Tisher (1979) suggested studying the impact that different types of school environments have upon induction experiences of different types of beginning teachers. For example, some studies (Dreeben, 1983; Gitlin, 1981) have found that certain structural properties of schools, such as their spatial arrangement (traditional versus open-plan) and authority relations influenced the character of teachers' work activities. Fenstermacher (1980) credited the characteristics of an

institution with even more impact. He stated that experiences with the institutional characteristics of schools were the most potent determinants of teachers' intentions (motives, plans, deliberate choices), which in turn determined their performance in the classroom. Little's (1982) investigation of the social organization of the school as a workplace yielded further insight into some of the ways that workplace conditions contribute to school success or the lack thereof. In successful schools (determined on the basis of aggregate standardized achievement scores over a 3-year period in reading, language arts, and mathematics) teachers interacted in a more professional manner with fellow teachers or administrators than in unsuccessful ones. These interactions included talk about instruction, structured observation, and shared planning and preparation.

Purpose of the Study

This study focused on two beginning teachers participating in induction programs aimed at easing their transition into teaching. The institutional factors that affected their interactions with the team of educators assigned to assist and evaluate them were investigated. In addition, how these actions affected beginning teachers' evaluations of induction programs were examined. Implications for practice and for future research were suggested. In this study institutional factors were defined as the milieu of the school including the community in which the school was located, the structural organization of the school, school regularities, school decision making, faculty involvement with the beginning teacher, inservice support mechanisms established by the principal, and specific classroom and resource constraints.

Sample

The Teacher Induction Study investigated two state-mandated beginning teacher programs and examined the translation of state policy by four school districts, 13 individual schools, and 32 classrooms. In both states, a team concept was employed to implement the induction program. Each team was composed of four members: a beginning teacher, a peer teacher, a building level administrator, and an "other educator." In one state the other educator was a representative from an institution of higher education; in the second state, the other educator was specified only as a professional educator.

From this larger sample, two beginning teacher teams were selected for this paper. Case histories of the 16 teams included in the Teacher Induction Study were reviewed and one case illustrating how institutional factors influenced team interactions in a positive way and one case illustrating how institutional factors influenced team interactions in a negative way were identified for further study. In the judgment of the authors, these two cases represented extreme examples of the influence of institutional factors. In order to protect the anonymity of participants, identifying information such as grade level and subject matter assignments, as well as gender of participants, have been altered.

Data

Data were collected from the following sources: (1) individual journals kept by the beginning teacher, the peer teacher, the building level administrator, and the other educator; (2) five interviews with each of the team members; (3) five 1-hour classroom observations of each beginning teacher and two 1-hour observations of each peer teacher; (4) a demographic questionnaire detailing each team member's background and experience in

education; and (5) a performance evaluation by the beginning teacher of the team's effectiveness in working with him.

Analysis

Using a case study approach, data were qualitatively analyzed to determine the characteristics of each team. The authors independently read the complete data set for each case identifying and focusing upon the institutional factors which affected the type of experience a beginning teacher had with his team members. Institutional factors, previously defined, were identified and examined in both cases. These factors were selected for examination because prior research and the authors' clinical teaching experiences suggested they were influential in impacting beginning teacher interactions. After reading and reviewing the data set, the authors shared their perceptions arising from the data and cited the evidence upon which those perceptions were based.

The following questions emerged from the data set: What institutional factors impacted beginning teachers' interactions with the team assigned to them in a positive way? What institutional factors impacted beginning teachers' interactions with the team assigned to them in a negative way? How did the interactions (positive or negative) affect the beginning teachers' evaluation of the induction program?

Findings

Impact of Institutional Factors on Beginning Teacher A

An open-plan school and subject/grade level team planning made it easier for Beginning Teacher A to become familiar with school requirements and to be accepted by his fellow teachers. Data analysis indicated that these institutional factors made it easier for the beginning teacher to: 1) acquire needed information about school expectations and procedures for the

subject area taught; 2) access instructional materials and human resources; and 3) develop positive working relationships with other staff members. The following section describes how the school organization assisted the beginning teacher.

Access to information. The open nature of the classrooms allowed this teacher to become aware of how the subject area he taught was being presented by his fellow teachers. This glimpse into their classrooms allowed the beginning teacher, to note among other things, how teachers decorated/arranged their classrooms, what curriculum was being covered at a given time, and what instructional techniques were being used by other teachers to present the material. In addition, the beginning teacher could ascertain if actual teaching behaviors matched school expectations.

The open-nature of the classrooms also helped team members become knowledgeable about Beginning Teacher A's classroom and thus more able to provide needed assistance. The principal reported conducting three formal observations in Beginning Teacher A's room, but qualified this number by saying, "...Every time I walk out there, I can see him and do some observation...almost daily I'm out there and can see what he's doing."

The peer teacher also credited the open-nature of the school with increasing her confidence in determining Beginning Teacher A's competency in the classroom. She stated:

> Just...being in the open area I had an opportunity [to observe]. When I walked to lunch, when I was even teaching my own class--basically--I knew how things were going over there. I knew kids were not standing on chairs, yelling and screaming. I would walk by and see him up there doing things and then when I was actually in his classroom that feeling was reinforced and confirmed, but I think if I had been in a school

that was self-contained and I just went into his classroom for the minimum of two hours and then wrote an observation, I would not have felt at all comfortable...

The beginning teacher's subject/grade level team met every week to plan the curriculum to be covered in the weeks to follow. At this meeting, teachers reported how much material had been covered in the previous week(s) and how well students were mastering the material. Such reporting helped the beginning teacher to resolve issues regarding content coverage, pacing of lessons and student assessment.

Other contextual conditions, including school-based inservice, promoted the beginning teacher's access to grade-level, work-specific information. Beginning Teacher A reported after his first teaching day:

> I felt like the (first) day was a success. I was very pleased. All the preparation that the school system and school had put me through really paid off...I also consider myself very fortunate to be in a system that is so willing to help me.

Beginning teachers at this school received building level inservice prior to their assignment to new tasks such as yard or lunch duty, enrollment of students, report card preparation or hosting parents' night. These inservice sessions were usually held two weeks in advance of the scheduled new task, and were followed by specific planning for the task and feedback to the beginning teacher by his peer teacher. During the completion of the task itself, other teachers at the school (assigned through a buddy system) lent assistance and provided feedback. One example cited by Beginning Teacher A was an inservice on school expectations for teacher performance during parent night two weeks prior to the scheduled event. Different scenarios of teacher-parent interactions were presented and recommendations

were made for specific teacher responses to various parental concerns. After the inservice the beginning teacher met with his peer teacher to outline the presentation he would make to parents; to decide upon appropriate responses to queries regarding the curriculum, grading procedures and/or discipline issues; and to plan how he would select and display students' work.

Both the open nature of the school and the grade/subject area team planning increased the accountability of the beginning teacher since he was in open view of anyone at the school interested in his classroom performance. At the same time, this openness gave him clues about what was considered important in classroom performance in the school. In addition, Beginning Teacher A's success at new tasks was insured through inservice which included presentation, planning, action and feedback on specific job-related skills.

Access to instructional resources. At this school, teachers belonging to a grade/subject area team were expected to contribute instructional materials to a pool of materials available for use by all team members. Beginning Teacher A used the same handouts, activity ideas, transparencies, and tests as experienced teachers. He was also given the assignment of developing new materials for use by his grade level.

Beginning Teacher A reported receiving numerous offers of assistance from other teachers in the building. The principal also instituted a buddy system where more experienced teachers helped the beginning teachers in completing new and unknown tasks, thereby increasing the beginning teachers' chance of success.

Furthermore, Beginning Teacher A had previously taught at this school as a student teacher and knew about the school facilities, equipment, and

special services personnel. As a result he was able to use the materials developed during his student teaching experience which had been in the same subject area.

Finally, Beginning Teacher A was paired with a peer teacher who had many years of teaching experience in the same subject matter. When Beginning Teacher A encountered "problems" the peer teacher provided helpful feedback: "...I can go to her, I do go to her, with curriculum problems, with class management problems, with everything..."

Working relationships. Beginning Teacher A saw the school personnel as knowledgeable and professional. The staff often produced concrete, specific recommendations for action which the beginning teacher could follow. Furthermore, in giving this helpful advice, the staff did so in a manner befitting one professional addressing another professional. This professionalism was very evident as the beginning teacher discussed his peer teacher. She was his cooperating teacher when he was a student teacher.

> Last year I was in a student role to her, learning from her. And even though I'm still learning from her, she has completely changed her ideas. She no longer holds me in a student teacher type thing...She's changed...I can see where some teachers probably couldn't.

In summary, Beginning Teacher A experienced a smooth transition into teaching. Beginning Teacher B presents a contrasting situation.

Impact of Institutional Factors on Beginning Teacher B

Multiple teaching assignments and "floating," served as constraints for Beginning Teacher B. Specifically, teaching assignments in two department and lack of a single classroom base made it more difficult for the beginning teacher to: 1) acquire needed information about school expectations and procedures for the subject areas taught; 2) access instructional materials

and human resources; and 3) develop positive working relationships with other staff members. The following section describes how the school organization placed additional demands on the beginning teacher.

Access to information. The nature of the beginning teacher's assignment and his classroom situation made it difficult for him to learn the curricular expectations and requirements for two assigned subject areas across three levels, including a preparation for a class of special students. In addition, Beginning Teacher B had to secure needed textbooks, diagnostic tests, workbooks, and other materials for these subject areas and levels. The amount of information needed to teach in this situation was overwhelming to the beginning teacher. Awareness of the situation was noted by this beginning teacher is an early journal entry.

> The first two weeks I thought I was going to die but I've become adjusted...I guess I had no idea what I was getting into when I was getting this job. I had no idea as far as how much preparation it would take and things like that. I had hoped too that I would be able to work with the other teachers more closely...

Yet, his assigned team had expertise in only one of the two subject areas assigned to Beginning Teacher B.

Having team members with expertise in only one of the two subjects taught by the beginning teacher limited the amount of helpful information he received. Both the peer teacher and the other educator reported observing the beginning teacher and providing assistance in only one subject area. In fact, the peer teacher questioned being chosen for the role of peer teacher since she taught only one of the subjects taught by Beginning Teacher B. In her view, Beginning Teacher B should have had a peer teacher from the other subject area since he taught three periods of that subject.

Furthermore, the peer teacher saw her function bounded by parameters such as grade level and state-mandated curriculum requirements. Consequently, when Beginning Teacher B requested information from his peer teacher outside these parameters, he received recommendations which were general or philosophical in nature, i.e., not specific to the subject area. For example, in documenting topics discussed early in the school year, the peer teacher stated, "we had a lengthy discussion--the merits of long-range planning, daily plans, and the need to be flexible." At another planning meeting they again talked about lesson plans, but they also discussed and evaluated the structure of special programs. The beginning teacher and the peer teacher differed as to how the special program should be implemented. Disagreements were also documented regarding the future of the school, and whether student acceleration in the curriculum should occur and how best to do it.

Feedback from team members following scheduled observations were another source of information for the beginning teacher. However, Beginning Teacher B was not all-accepting of the information/feedback given to him by team members. Rather, the merit of the feedback was evaluated given the beginning teacher's perception of the competence of the individual team member. At the initial team meeting, called to discuss areas of teaching in which the beginning teacher needed to improve, the principal stated, "gotta find something. Let's check this or would you rather check this." This trivialization of the induction program led the beginning teacher to evaluate the principal's observations as a waste of time. The beginning teacher also judged feedback following the second formal observation as illogical and nonsensical.

Specifically, the principal set a date for the observation and asked the beginning teacher to conduct a review. The beginning teacher had already planned for students to present projects and reports. The principal requested that the beginning teacher interrupt this schedule and begin class with a repeat of a review conducted the week before. In addition, she requested that the beginning teacher introduce a new lesson on the following day. The beginning teacher stated in a subsequent interview that interrupting a class schedule to repeat a review of material and to introduce a new lesson just to demonstrate competencies seemed illogical. Following the principal's observations and feedback on his lesson, Beginning Teacher B disagreed (internally) with the principal's interpretation of terms. The principal interpreted review to mean the review of "everything" that related to the topic, not just the review of new information presented during that lesson. Another item cited by the principal was that Beginning Teacher B should walk around the room as he lectured. This suggestion was similarly evaluated by the beginning teacher as being nonsensical in the context of his lesson. Furthermore, he weighed the principal's suggestions on the basis of his own personal preferences. When told to pace the floor while lecturing, Beginning Teacher B recalled his own distaste for college professors who did so. Beginning Teacher B received negative written feedback on this observation and was asked to improve. Even though the principal's recommendations had no merit in Beginning Teacher B's opinion, he decided to "do as I am told."

This weighing of feedback and actions occurred across team member roles and supported the beginning teacher's evaluation of the principal's observation in his classroom. The peer teacher commented: "She [the principal] really, as usual, doesn't seem to understand what we're

doing...Nobody can find out anything to say about what Beginning Teacher B is doing to indicate that he needs help." In addition, the peer teacher evaluated the principal's comments as "nitpicking" and cited several examples, such as mentioning that the bell rang before the beginning teacher had finished reviewing and the observation that one child made a comment to which the beginning teacher didn't respond.

In addition, teaching multiple subject areas in a different grade meant that the beginning teacher attended different inservice meetings than the peer teacher attended. At times, Beginning Teacher B attended inservice on topics related to the teaching of exceptional children, at other times he attended inservice sessions on the teaching of one subject, while both the peer teacher and the other educator attended inservice related to his other teaching area. No mention was made by any of the team members on whether Beginning Teacher B ever received any inservice on the teaching of their common subject area. Furthermore, because Beginning Teacher B taught a subject at one grade level and his peer teacher taught the same subject on another grade level, they did not attend the same grade level meetings.

Access to Instructional Resources

The support team assigned to help Beginning Teacher B reported helping him to acquire needed resources only for their common subject matter area. Assistance in the other subject area or with his special class was rarely provided. The suggestion that Beginning Teacher B visit a teacher at another school was made several times by different persons on the support team, but was never implemented.

Furthermore, the support team itself was organized late in the school year. Beginning his first year of teaching without the support team's assistance, Beginning Teacher B reported having a difficult time preparing

unit plans, lesson plans, lectures, independent work, and bulletin boards. He noted:

> I feel so pressured these days! I am beginning to feel that I've bitten off too much with four preparations. I don't get into bed before 11:00 pm. I'm usually typing out tests or assignments from the time I get home until dinner, and then from 7:00-9:30 every evening.

In addition, having to teach multiple subject areas meant that Beginning Teacher B was technically a member of three departments. Because he was not a full-time member of any of these departments, he often found himself competing for limited resources with the other teachers. On one occasion, Beginning Teacher B took some instructional materials out of the storage area. The other teachers did not know he had the material, and began a search for it. In describing this episode, Beginning Teacher B stated, "the teacher came storming in here asking if I knew where it was, asking why I needed it since I teach a special class."

Beginning Teacher B coped with this situation by asking the peer teacher to request the other teachers to share materials. The peer teacher also confronted the principal on several occasions about Beginning Teacher B's needs for materials.

As an added way of coping, Beginning Teacher B avoided those teachers who would not share, even though he knew that lack of materials decreased his ability to teach effectively. Furthermore, he learned to rely on the services provided by outside resources. During the year, Beginning Teacher B made several trips to the district office to check out materials.

In addition to having multiple preparations in two different subject areas and to teaching an exceptional class, Beginning Teacher B had to "float" among several rooms. Teaching in several rooms was an added factor

he had to take into account in planning his lessons. On one occasion Beginning Teacher B prepared a demonstration on the importance of observation. As he moved from room to room, some items were "lost" and he had to present the lesson without them. As can be expected, the lesson objectives were not met. Teaching effective lessons was a daily problem because of the lack of a permanent single room situation. Eventually Beginning Teacher B received the materials he needed. Although team members commented throughout the year on the difficult situation this beginning teacher had, no action was taken at the support team level, the department level, or the school level. It was always referred to as "his [the beginning teacher's] problem."

Working relationships. Beginning Teacher B's limited access to information and resources and his persistence in trying to acquire them led to interactions where staff with varying levels of authority tried to resolve his situation. Unfortunately, these interactions frequently took the form of a victim-villain-rescuer interaction, with someone having higher authority admonishing someone with less authority to share resources with Beginning Teacher B. For example, his peer teacher, chairperson of one department, finally scheduled a meeting with the teachers in the other department in which Beginning Teacher B taught. Later, he reported that "as soon as the teachers realized the circumstances, they were very cooperative." The school principal, similarly met with Beginning Teacher B in response to his voiced needs. During that meeting the principal called in the chairperson of the second department to provide on-the-spot assistance and advice to Beginning Teacher B. Upon reflection about this meeting, Beginning Teacher B acknowledged that the chairperson was able to help a great deal. Nevertheless, he wondered why his previous attempts to

secure information from the chairperson had been unsuccessful and why it took a direct order from the principal for her to share and be helpful.

Lack of specificity about task requirements, such as what to discuss or not to discuss during parents' night complicated this teacher's relationship with the principal and with parents. The afternoon prior to parents' night Beginning Teacher B and his peer teacher had a short discussion about what to expect that evening. Later, Beginning Teacher B reported how he had felt. He stated:

> I was really embarrassed to speak to my special students' parents...I voiced several of my concerns--namely that we don't have materials or money. I asked if they would like to begin a parents' group. The purpose would be to coordinate chaperones for field trips, to aid in fund raising projects, and to add a little amplitude to my cries for help to the administration.

When Beginning Teacher B approached the principal with his plan to involve parents in securing resources, the principal responded to all suggestions in a negative manner. Thus, Beginning Teacher B felt in a no-win situation. The school could not supply needed materials or money for field trips and yet Beginning Teacher B was being specifically asked not to find ways on his own to remedy the situation.

Summary of Differences in Context

Beginning Teacher A taught in a familiar, supportive context. His previous year's experience of student teaching at that school eased his transition as he was familiar with school rules, with procedures for acquiring materials, and with the community. In addition, working in an open-plan school that had grade/subject area team level planning increased accountability and facilitated his access to information and resources

needed for determining curriculum content, for selecting instructional material, and for determining student pacing and evaluation. Finally, the beginning teacher's placement in a school having strong, proactive leadership where school-level inservice was scheduled and a buddy system established to promote success in school tasks, enhanced the trust and interpersonal communication enjoyed by him with his team members and other school faculty. Within this context, Beginning Teacher A perceived the state-mandated program as providing specific, helpful assistance for the purpose of improving his teaching and insuring success during the first year of teaching.

In contrast, Beginning Teacher B's first year teaching experience took place in a more demanding context. His "impossible" teaching assignment required that he teach multiple subject areas with multiple levels and preparations, and that he travel to several classrooms. These demands lessened his opportunities to learn about curricular requirements because he had to divide his inservice training to meet needs in two subject areas, and his team members would only assist in their one area of expertise. In addition, several conditions at this school precluded Beginning Teacher B from establishing strong interpersonal relationships with his peers, with his team members or with the principal of the school. Being assigned to two subject area departments and the exceptional students' department meant he was not considered a "real" member of any department. Beginning Teacher B reported on several occasions that he felt picked on and that he blamed the principal for not easing his "impossible" teaching assignment. Within the induction program, team members assigned to ease his entry into teaching had no suggestions for dealing with his concerns about his teaching assignment, or about floating from classroom to classroom. Beginning Teacher B

expressed concern for being evaluated by others without their taking into consideration the full implications of the difficult teaching conditions. He judged the team as being of little help. Thus, Beginning Teacher B's appraisal of the induction program was less than favorable.

Conclusions

1. Teaching in an open-plan classroom (versus the traditional classroom) provided the beginning teacher with the opportunity to know what subject areas were being taught by other teachers and how these were taught. It also served as a gauge for determining the gap between actual teaching behaviors and school expectations.
2. The open-plan classroom provided an additional incentive for the beginning teacher. Because other teachers saw him at work and continuously observed and evaluated his teaching, it increased accountability. In this context, the beginning teacher saw the induction program as filling a real need, and as a vehicle for assuring his own professionalism in the future.
3. Beginning teachers with classroom assignments and teaching schedules that differ from the norm, may have more difficulty in being "successful." The impact of institutional factors needs to be taken into account in induction programs.
4. The beginning teacher's evaluation of the induction program as a positive or a negative experience was related to his successful/unsuccessful experiences as a beginning teacher and his perceptions of the contributions of team members to his success or lack of success.

These conclusions indicated that for Beginning Teacher A the presence of certain factors combined to ease his entry into teaching; the absence of

these factors made the entry of Beginning Teacher B more difficult and the induction program did not compensate.

Implications

The conclusions point to the importance of institutional factors that facilitate or hinder the implementation of a state-mandated teacher induction program. Institutional factors which facilitated the implementation of an induction program included: a climate promoting professionalism at the school level, specific grading and discipline policies, grade level/subject area teams, and inservice scheduled at the campus level on job-embedded topics. Factors which hindered implementation of an induction program included: no ready resource for all subjects taught, a peer teacher at a different grade level or in a different subject, multiple preparations, and a "floating" assignment (no single assigned classroom).

Findings and conclusions also suggested that building level administrators charged with implementing teacher induction programs need to perform beyond what state induction programs currently call for them to do as one of the four members of the beginning teacher's support team. The state requirements address only content and process issues, i.e., what assistance is provided and in what manner, for the support team to follow. It is important, however, that building level administrators also address issues related to the institutional context in which that assistance is provided. They need to be able to examine institutional factors such as policy, inservice, and lesson plan requirements, and determine the "fit" between these and the requirements of the induction program.

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